Unrestrained Provincialism

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor : K. G. MASHRUWALA

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BAPU AS A DISCIPLINARIAN

It was on Christmas Eve that I sent him an offer of my services. He promptly sent for me and said that I should be prepared to go out with him and give an unconditional offer before he could consider it. The next day I did this, adding that in his interests as well as mine I might remain on six months' probation. He sent a terse reply in his own handwriting: "You should report yourself for service tomorrow at 10-00 a. m.— Bapu". I was overjoyed — yet the order came to me with a shock of surprise as it did not give me any time to settle certain personal affairs nor to take formal leave of the Congress President and the General Secretary under whom I was employed during the preceding five months. But my offer was unconditional and his call peremptory. So I had to leave letters of apology at the A. I. C. C. office and on the 30th of December reported to him as ordered — only ten minutes earlier as he pointed out to me.

Twice during the first twelve days I went late to Birla House, once with permission and the second time after leaving word with a co-worker. That provoked the sharp question from Bapu as to how often I wanted to be late. I replied that a few urgent matters called for my attention, but he simply reminded me of my contract. Eventually as a compromise he agreed that I could be late but only to attend to basic human needs, not otherwise.

On the New Year Day Bapu asked me to examine the translation of his A. I. C. C. speech of June, 1947 and I left it with him at night, suggesting a few verbal amendments in the margin. The next morning he wanted me to see which corrections he had accepted and asked me to bring the same copy from Shri Kalyanam. As it was raining, I shouted for it to a third person standing outside the latter's room, but he brought instead the final typed copy. I began reading it. Bapu had the habit not only of giving a precise order but on insisting on an equally precise compliance. So he quoted a Latin proverb to me, meaning that a delegate must not delegate his task to a sub-delegate. "Bapu," I replied, "some functions by nature are delegable and others not. I could never have done all the work I did during my 30 years' Government service if I had rigidly followed such a maxim." Bapu said that there I had authority to enforce strict obedience to which I replied that here I expected a stronger uniting force among our staff, viz. love and loyalty to a common cause and a common master. Not satisfied, Bapu observed that I was indulging in vain disputations, instead of recognizing my error as was actually proved by the fact that the wrong copy had been brought. He reminded me that I had come to him as a child and he trusted my word and would treat me as such. I reaffirmed that I was a mere child — a playful and peevish one at that!

On or about the 23rd January, as I was reading to him my notes taken from newspapers, Maulana Azad came in and I withdrew. At the close of the interview Bapu wanted to bring to Maulanasaheb's notice one item of news — the report of an Indo-Pakistan League formed with sinister designs — and beckoned to me to bring my notebook. It took me five minutes to trace it. As I was going home that night, he took me to task for wasting five minutes of Maulanasaheb's time, saying "You have severely distressed me by your carelessness." I felt sullen. After all I thought I could only do my best which I felt I was faithfully doing. The next day I disclosed my mind to Dr. Sushila Nayyar and said that I had no desire to cause distress to Bapu. He should accept me as I was and bear with me and my failings — or let me go. It was sweet of her to have consoled me and said that they were all happy that I had joined them and that it behoved us also to bear with Bapu as we would with our own father. I was comforted and as Bapu was convalescing, I entreated her not to broach the matter with him. But she, as Bapu's own little daughter, could not keep a secret and went and told Bapu all about it. So as I came the next day and offered my *pranams*, he pacified me and very gently said that I should keep smiling even when he was annoyed. I said, "Bapu, I was notoriously careless in arranging my papers in the Government of India and I shall tell you some tit-bits about it later. This is a sixty year old habit with me and is apt to repeat itself though I shall try to mend it. But if it distresses you, you can give me the sack." Bapu replied, with a beaming smile, that he had no desire to break the six months' contract and would regard it as a breach of promise on my part if I did so.

For many things the memory of this meeting will abide with me as a priceless treasure and I shall have occasion to revert to it. Suffice it to

say here that he sent me away light and happy as a child, and I prized even his rigid discipline if only because it brought in its wake the healing balm of his exquisite love and sweetness. Indeed I discovered that he was verily a Bapu to us — tender and affectionate though sometimes severe and exacting by virtue and right of his paternal authority.

New Delhi, 14-2-'48 P. B. CHANDWANI

MYSORE NOTES — I

I

1. EXEMPLARY CHARITY

While touring in the north of Mysore State in May last for the Kasturba Trust and Harijan work combined, I came across an act of exemplary charity by two friends, who cannot be called very rich or prosperous. They have built a Colony of pucca houses with roofs of Mangalore tiles for 14 Harijan families in the midst of a forest in the Western Ghats. The Colony consists of houses for 14 Harijan working class families, a Bhajan Mandir for them, a well for drinking water and also an approach road at the total cost of Rs. 32,000. Out of this, the Mysore Government gave a grant of Rs. 8,000 and Shri Krishnayya Bhakta and his partner, village Agumbe, District Shimoga paid the rest. This was opened on the 19th May, 1947 by the late Dr. T. C. M. Royan, the then Minister of Mysore State. The fact that the Harijans so well-housed are their casual or permanent workmen does not diminish the worth of the act. For, such excellent house accommodation is provided by very few capitalists who have large Coffee and Tea plantations in the hilly parts of Mysore State and where the labour brought there from South Kanara District is reported to be greatly exploited by them.

2. A PLEASANT SURPRISE

I was taken to visit a Kasturba village centre in the village Kantarajpur, Hassan District (Mysore State). There I learnt that twenty Harijan families of that village were doing the work of coppersmiths from the copper sheets and circles supplied to them by the merchants of the village. I saw them doing this kind of work in their houses and saw the iron implements and hammers with which they prepared them. I was told that they were now earning from Re. 1 to Rs. 4 per day per family for about 6 months in a year. I was told that during the war years, copper sheets and circles were not available and hence they were practically starving. Fortunately, they could get raw material now and thus could stand on their own legs and make more money.

In the District of Garhwal all carpenters, tailors, smiths and other artisans once went by the generic name of Doms, but now by the honorific name of Shilpakars or artisans, thanks to the Late Lala Lajpatrai. Here the merchants have made the Harijans artisans. Thanks to them also.

3. A VILLAGE REFORMED

On the 20th of May, 1948 I visited 11 village centres of Kasturba Trust in the Mysore State. One of them was in the village of Karle in Hassan District. The centre was 2½ years old and the following summary of the report of the work done there by Shri Thimappa Gowda, the Secretary will be read with interest:

> Nearly twenty years ago this village was the home of horrible drunkards and jail-birds. Not even a day passed without a hand to hand fight in this village. They used to worship the Devil-god by killing hundreds of he-buffaloes in the belief that thereby they could ensure bumper crop. In the year 1941 after completing his education Shri Thimappa Gowda settled down in the village and began to persuade them to give up bad habits. As his father was the headman of the village, his words carried respect and the young men of the village began to rally round him. They took an oath not to drink.
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> A Co-operative Society was started nearly five years ago in 1943 through which cloth, kerosene and agricultural implements were supplied during the hard days of the war. Shri Thimappa was able to persuade the elders to give up the sacrifice of the he-buffaloes which they practised once a year. Being the only educated young man in the village, the elders looked upon him with awe. He took advantage of this and pressed them to give up drinking completely and also to do village reform work, and succeeded to a great extent in doing so.
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> In September, 1945 Shrimati Yashodhara Dasappa sanctioned a Grama Seva Centre for the village. The Gram Sevikas began the work of improvement in this village and have done considerable and highly commendable work. They stopped the practice of the villagers drying cowdung cakes on the outer walls of the houses. They managed to get numerous pits in the street filled up by the villagers with stones etc., and got side drains, a well and a bridge constructed. The cost may be estimated at about Rs. 4,000. They taught the women of this village to drop their shyness and to mix freely with the educated women on equal terms; to keep their houses and surroundings clean; to comb their hair well and to bathe at least twice a week. They conducted adult literacy classes for the women. Now nearly 20 girls can read well. They carry on medical relief work and conduct a *Balvadi* with nearly 70 children (more than half of whom are girls), with distribution of mid-day refreshments to them every day. The villagers have contributed 1300 seers of paddy for this purpose. Shri Thimappa started Subhash Senas to help the Gram Sevikas in their village improvement work. With the help of these Sevikas, he was able to persuade people to admit Harijans in the village temple. In the month of March last the Hon. Minister Shri K. T. Bhashyam led the Harijans to this temple. The villagers have come forward to donate Rs. 1000 to build the Gram Seva Building and Mr. Magappa Gowda has donated the land for the said building. The Government have now sanctioned nearly Rs. 10,000 for several village improvement works.

In these parts only *ragi* and paddy are grown and no commercial crops are being raised. Though the step might have been wise as a policy, the

fact remains that even during the war period the villagers were not able to earn well and as a result remain poor even today. The centre requires funds for carrying out various items of its programme.

A. V. THAKKAR

LEST WE FORGET

VII

THE FEAR OF DEATH

[This is my translation of a Gujarati article by Gandhiji which appeared in *Young India* of October 13, 1921. V. G. D.]

I have been collecting descriptions of Swaraj. One of these would be: Swaraj is the abandonment of the fear of death. A nation which allows itself to be influenced by the fear of death cannot attain Swaraj, and cannot retain it if somehow attained.

English people carry their lives in their pockets. Arabs and Pathans consider death as nothing more than an ordinary ailment; they never weep when a relation dies. Boer women are perfectly innocent of this fear. In the Boer war thousands of young Boer women became widows, but they never cared. It did not matter in the least if the husband or the son was lost; it was enough and more than enough that the country's honour was safe. What booted the husband if the country was enslaved? It was infinitely better to bury a son's mortal remains and to cherish his immortal memory than to bring him up as a serf. Thus did the Boer women steel their hearts and cheerfully give up their darlings to the angel of death.

The people I have mentioned kill and get killed. But what of those who do not kill but are only ready to die themselves? Such people become the objects of a world's adoration. They are the salt of the earth.

The English and the Germans fought one another; they killed and got killed. The result is that animosities have increased. There is no end of unrest and the present condition of Europe is pitiful. There is more of deceit, and each is anxious to circumvent the rest.

But the fearlessness which we are cultivating is of a nobler and purer order, and it is therefore that we hope to achieve a signal victory within a very short time.

When we attain Swaraj, many of us will have given up the fear of death; or else we shall not have attained Swaraj. Till now mostly young boys have died in the cause. Those who died in Aligadh were all below twentyone. No one knew who they were. If Government resort to firing now, I am hoping that some men of the first rank will have the opportunity of offering up the supreme sacrifice.

Why should we be upset when children or young men or old men die? Not a moment passes when some one is not born or is not dead in this world. We should feel the stupidity of rejoicing in a birth and lamenting a death. Those who believe in the soul, — and what Hindu, Musalman, or Parsi is there who does not, — know that the soul never dies. The souls of the living as well as of the dead are all one. The eternal processes of creation and destruction are going on ceaselessly. There is nothing in it for which we might give ourselves up to joy or sorrow. Even if we extend the idea of relationship only to our countrymen and take all the births in the country as taking place in our own family, how many births shall we celebrate? If we weep for all the deaths in our country, the tears in our eyes would never dry. This train of thought should help us to get rid of all fear of death.

India, they say, is a nation of philosophers; and we have not been unwilling to appropriate the compliment. Still hardly any other nation becomes so helpless in the face of death as we do. And in India again, no other community betrays so much of this helplessness as the Hindus. A single birth is enough for us to be beside ourselves with ludicrous joyfulness. A death makes us indulge in orgies of loud lamentation which condemn the neighbourhood to sleeplessness for the night. If we wish to attain Swaraj, and if having attained it, wish to make it something to be proud of, we must perfectly renounce this unseemly fright.

And what is imprisonment to the man who is fearless of death itself? If the reader will think it out a little, he will find that if Swaraj is delayed, it is delayed because we are not prepared calmly to meet death and inconveniences lesser than death.

As larger and larger numbers of innocent men come out to welcome death, their sacrifice will become the potent instrument for the salvation of all others; and there will be a minimum of suffering. Suffering cheerfully endured ceases to be suffering and is transmuted into an ineffable joy. The man who flies from suffering is the victim of endless tribulation before it has come to him and is half dead when it does come. But one who is cheerfully ready for anything and everything that comes escapes all pain; his cheerfulness acts as an anaesthetic.

I have been led to write about this subject, because we have got to envisage even death if we will have Swaraj this very year. One who is previously prepared often escapes accidents; and this may well be the case with us. It is my firm conviction that Swadeshi constitutes this preparation. When our Swadeshi is a success, neither this Government nor any one else will feel the necessity of putting us to any further test.

Still it is best not to neglect any contingency whatever. Possession of power makes men blind and deaf; they cannot see things which are under their very nose, and cannot hear things which invade their ears. There is thus no knowing what this power-intoxicated Government may not do. So it seemed to me that patriotic men ought to be prepared for death, imprisonment and similar troubles.

The brave meet death with a smile on their lips but they are circumspect all the same. There is no room for foolhardiness in this non-violent war. We do not propose to go to jail or to die by an immoral act. We must mount the gallows while resisting the oppressive laws of this Government.

HARIJAN

June 27 1948

UNRESTRAINED PROVINCIALISM

A correspondent has drawn attention to a circular issued by the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, Bihar, addressed to forty-eight Mining Concerns. The following is the text of the circular:

"Dated Patna, the 15th January, '48

Subject: Employment of Biharis by the Holders of Mining Concerns in the District of Singbhum.

Sir,

I am directed to bring to your notice the provision of the Provincial Government's new Mineral Policy. No Mining lease will in future be granted to any person/Firm unless he/it is willing to make all non-manual appointments on the recommendation of a Board to be constituted by the Government. They have come to this decision because of the frequent complaints that Biharis in general, and local people in particular, do not get suitable appointments. It is true that such a term is not embodied in the existing leases held by them; but Government desire to impress on you the desirability of giving effect to this policy of Government. I am to request that you will be good enough to report to Government what action you take on this letter.

I have etc.

Secretary"

The correspondent alleges that although it purports to be in the interest of the Biharis, it is really a crusade against the Bengali-speaking minority against whom the circular will actually operate.

I do not know how far the correspondent is justified in making this insinuation, but I do think that the circular is not at all in order. If the Constitution of Free India is going to recognize the right of every Indian citizen to reside and settle in any part of India, then, I believe, it carries with it the parallel obligation that no member of the Union shall pursue a policy which will prevent a settler from obtaining in that state a means of livelihood for which he is fitted. I have grave doubts whether a Government of the type contemplated by the Congress can interfere to the extent of asking business firms operating in its province to employ the members of its staff from a particular class of citizens only. I should consider this to be rather unusual encroachment on the liberty of employers to select their assistants.

So far with regard to the circular. To the Bengalis of Bihar, I should say, as I would say to the Marwadis, Gujaratis, Sindhis and other emigrants to another province, that it is their duty to merge themselves completely with the life and people of the province into which they migrate. It is not at all desirable and in the interest of a nation that persons should preserve a separate provincial entity in their new domicile. The Bengalis, Gujaratis, Marwadis, Sindhis etc. must become complete Biharis if they want to make Bihar their permanent home. It is the duty of the people going from one province into another and settling down there not to create a minority problem whether communal, provincial or other. They must learn and speak the language of the new domicile as well as any indigenous resident, and also adopt to the greatest extent possible the same dress and mode of living. The Bengalis and other non-Biharis of Bihar who feel aggrieved by the attitude of the Biharis may well be asked how it is that in spite of having settled down in Bihar for centuries they still remain Bengalis, Marwadis, Gujaratis and not full Biharis? If they insist on retaining their Bengalism, Marwadism etc. the Biharis cannot be blamed for regarding them as strangers among them. They too must move forward to be entitled to equality.

I have mentioned Bihar here, but the same principle applies to every other province; and it has become of increased importance at present, where every province is faced with the problem of rehabilitating refugees from Sind, Punjab etc. The sooner the refugees merge themselves with the life and people of their new region, the better and easier will be the solution. If they ask for creation of *Naya* Sind and *Naya* Punjab districts, *tahsils* or towns in every province, they will create insoluble problems.

Wardha, 15-6-'48 K. G. MASHRUWALA

PROPPING UP 'JAWARI'

[This is the account of a lesson given to students of the 7th Grade in the Sevagram Basic School.

—D. P.]

We woke up to a thickly covered December sky. Shri Aryanayakam, the Secretary of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and the head of the institution at Sevagram, lost no time in gauging the situation. Many *jawari* plants had been laid low by the rain. The threatened shower would destroy them permanently. The call of life sent the previously fixed programme by the board, and immediately after breakfast fields were humming with young voices busily propping up fallen plants.

I also took my class to our allotted field. Its shape was a rectangle beside a right-angled triangle. The various sides were measured and put down on the board placed by the side of the field, and the area of the field calculated. The distance between two plants was measured, and the number of plants found out. We knew the time at our disposal, and so the target for each boy was fixed.

Obviously the above gave us the opportunity to revise methods of measuring distances and area calculation, the Four Simple Rules of Arithmetic, the Unitary Method, the Rule of Three, etc., and at the same time it taught the boys the habit and appreciation of the advantages of pre-planning and division of labour — that is, it taught them the principles of efficient work.

The boys stood in one row and proceeded straight to the opposite side, each looking to the plants in the rows entrusted to him. They were

village boys, so they knew what they had to do. I also had my own rows to look after to provide the children with the example of hard and efficient work. Only now and then I had to abandon my line to restrain some restive child or to stimulate observation by frequently exchanging remarks with the students. The stems had grown very tall but the ears of the corn were very small. Why? A number of plants had to be tied together. Why? Green *jawari* is a delicacy for the village. Many boys stole some. Others reported against them. That provided me with an excellent opportunity of giving them the definition of stealing, and the social and individual dirt it involved. They also learnt that true friendship did not mean hiding each other's faults. Reporting could, however, be justified only if done in a friendly spirit and only after duly warning the person concerned. Otherwise, picking holes in others was an unedifying task. It created pride in oneself and irritated instead of reforming the other party.

The way each worked provided me with an index to his mood and character: the quickness with which he selected the right plants to be tied together, the neatness with which he tied them, the steadiness with which he worked etc.

At the stroke of the bell the boys came and gave the number of plants each had propped up to the Class Minister (*varg mantri*) who noted it down in his register.

In the afternoon they had to forego their rest and finish the work that had been left unfinished due to the laziness and irresponsibility of their comrades. In society all had to suffer for the sins of a few — a price that man had to pay for his gregarious instinct.

Afterwards we retired to the class room (the scarcity of shady trees in Sevagram makes them necessary) to elaborate the various lessons learnt in the field. The boys were told to ask questions about their work in the morning. These were noted down.

The question of plant-feeding brought in the earth, the sun and the air and that of food absorption brought in capillary action. The question of manure brought in its train the composition and decomposition of human and animal excreta, refuse, etc. Definitions of elements, compounds, chemical action, came in. Nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, etc. had to be explained. The similarity and connection of human life and plant life bound together in one cycle was also brought home to the children. The question of overgrown stems and small ears of corn led to the explanation: the field was on the site of trench latrines, so the plants got too much food in the beginning. By the time they grew the ears of corn the food had become exhausted. In the case of trees the exhaustion did not take place because the roots of trees went much deeper and were spread out over a much wider area. The ugliness of small ears of corn at the end of such long stems brought in the question of proportion as an essential of beauty.

The plants were kept at a fixed distance from each other so that each could have enough food without encroaching upon the 'private property' of its neighbour. All plants were given equal space to grow. In human society some had too much and some too little. That was why the communists believed in equal distribution with slight variations necessitated by the variations of life.

When a fallen plant was made to stand erect it had a tendency to fall back in its old direction. When, however, it was tied to another plant with the tendency to fall in the opposite direction, the 'actions' and 're-actions' of the two neutralized each other. So students got the idea of force and the equilibrium of forces.

Singly the plants had fallen down, but when tied together they regained the strength to stand up. It was similarly true of human life. "United we stand, divided we fall." Indian history and histories of the other countries of the world provided ample evidence of that.

The drops of water on the leaves led us to the cohesion of its surface particles. When a plant was disturbed the water drops on the leaves moved separately and ultimately fell off. That led to questions of force, momentum, acceleration and gravity.

Of course, the structure of the *jawari* plant came in. Where it was grown and why? brought in Geography. Its comparatively inferior food value led to what food value was, how it was measured and a host of other questions which children asked or which I could stimulate them to ask.

The place of *jawari* in the economy of our country and of the world led us to realms of Economics. Its importance to a poor country like India and especially to the Deccan plateau explained to boys the care with which every grain was husbanded.

There were so many common points noticed between the *jawari* plant and human life that the essential unity of all life was very easily brought home to the children. The pantheists and most religions called this "unity in diversity" as God or due to God, the all-pervading Principle.

So the boys had rendered a definite service to the community. They also learnt to react to life dynamically and methodically. The occasion provided exercise for, and thereby trained a very large number of, physical and mental faculties of both individual and social importance. It led to the acquisition of some knowledge of practically every subject: Economics, Politics, History, Geography, Botany, Physics, Chemistry, Arithmetic, Geometry, Bacteriology, Physiology, Dietetics, Morality, Religion, Philosophy, Aesthetics, and could lead to others which my ignorance alone prevented me from entering. The boys learnt all this concretely and in an integrated, that is, living manner. And all this to the dance and music of nature!

It may seem surprising that one of the simplest life processes could be so rich in educational potentialities. Yet it should not seem so. The simplest act of life calls forth the whole man with his instincts and habits, that is, with all his knowledge that has become digested into habits. It lays him bare. Now I understand how Gandhiji could judge a man by the way he swept the floor, washed his clothes or even sat. And yet our educationists refuse to see that the Basic method of education is the

most natural, the most sensible and the most economical method. It may have been imperfectly practised; its potentialities only partially laid bare. But even so, it is a thousand times better than the avalanche of waste represented by our abstract method of struggling with compartmentalized knowledge, torn from its context in life and thereby rendered unrecognizable.

Calcutta, 29-4-'48 DEV PRAKASH NAYYAR

SHRI VINOBA AT AJMER–II

(4)

FIRST VISIT TO KHWAJA PIR'S DARGAH

10-5-'48: The *Urs* festival of Khwaja Pir's *Dargah*, which is the greatest Muslim shrine in India, was held from the 10th to 17th May this year. Vinobaji visited the *Dargah* on the morning of the 10th. Although he was appointed to speak in the *Dargah* on Friday the 14th May, he had to comply to the request of the people who had gathered there to address them a few words.

Shri Vinoba asked the people to forget the tragic events which had recently taken place in India. It was always best to forget evil things. It was memory of evil things which turned men into brutes. The saints had taught them that they should remember God, do good things and forget misdeeds. It was incumbent upon Hindus and Muslims to live in amity as before. The *Dargah* was a holy place. It should be possible for everyone to resort to it without fear, and he who feared God need fear none else. Life in this world was short, and none could live longer than the appointed day by harbouring fear. Fear could enable him only to forget God and his own higher nature. A man often did such evil things in a moment of fear as he himself would be amazed at later on.

The Hindus and Muslims like all other creatures were made of the same earth. Whether after death they were cremated or buried, they all became dust. It was impossible to say from that whether it formed part of a Hindu or a Muslim. "Dust thou art, to dust returnest," was the truth of the body. The intervening period of physical life was a period of strife. It was called *fitna* in the *Quran*. God has sent men to this earth in order to test them. God tested the rich through their riches by seeing whether or not they made good use of their money and helped the needy. God tested the poor through their poverty by seeing whether or not they kept up their courage in adversity.

The summary of all religious teachings was that those who performed good deeds got good reward; those who sowed evil reaped evil in turn. With implicit faith in that teaching everyone must fearlessly worship his Maker. He would ask them that they should visit the *Dargah* for saying their prayers without harbouring the least fear. By God's grace they would have no trouble.

(5)

EQUAL REGARD FOR RELIGIOUS PLACES

Addressing the evening prayer meeting at Ajmer the same day, Shri Vinoba said that he wanted to relate what he saw and learnt that morning. He had walked up that morning to Taragarh to see the *Dargah*. On his way to the hill he came across a *chilla* (a place where one practises austerities for forty days). The Muslims were pleased to take him round all the places and he saw that they felt comforted by his visit to them. At the *Dargah* he saw an inscription that the Marathas had contributed towards the erection of the two buildings there. He was not surprised to read it, but was certainly glad. They should remember that it was a time when the Marathas were constantly at war with Muslims, and yet they thought it proper that they should help the Muslims in their religious practices, and caused that inscription to be made with an amount of self-satisfaction. That was one of the good lessons which Swami Ramdas, the Guru of Shivaji, had given to the Marathas. Shivaji had declared war against the tyrannical rule of his times and had obtained independence. But Swami Ramdas had taught him that, nevertheless, he should pay equal regard to all religions—including the religion of those with whom he was at war. They could see that reverence for every religion had permeated Shivaji throughout his life. Whenever he got an opportunity, he visited *masjids*. Swami Ramdas also did so. Shivaji had also made good arrangements for the *Haj* pilgrims. Thus he used to show his regard for Islam. The speaker mentioned all these particulars in order that they might also take a lesson from that account.

Since the partition, there was no longer any political fight between the two communities in India. The Hindu Mahasabha had also recognized it and resolved to that effect. There was now in existence a State which everybody could claim as his own. It was the duty of everyone to make that State strong. It was necessary for that purpose to maintain peace throughout the country. Under no circumstances should one take the law in one's own hands. He wanted to urge that even if there was a political strife, members of every community must show respect to every other religion. He compared the religion to one's mother. A child did not choose a mother. The lady who gave it birth became, *ipso facto*, its mother; it obtained its nourishment from her, and it is that mother whom it has to respect and serve. One who respected one's own mother would also respect the mothers of others. He, who had no respect for others' mothers, would not pay sufficient respect even to his own.

All religions led to God. They were like different roads; one seemed to go to the east, another to the west, but still everyone leading to and terminating in God. Consequently, one should join the festivals and devotional congregations of other religions also with respect and pleasure. They should also study the high and noble thoughts expressed in different scriptures. They had just heard the *Al Fatiha*; it was the first chapter of the *Quran*. It prayed that God should show them the right way and not a wrong one. Wrong ways there would be many, but the right was only one. The scriptural utterances, by showing the right path carried them to God, whether their language was Arabic or Sanskrit or Tamil. In a word, religion was enjoined for the realization of Truth. It was difficult to have the full view of Truth during one's lifetime. But even if one could see one of its sides, one would reach the goal of life.

He had heard, Shri Vinoba said, that the *urs* for which he had come was being held at Ajmer since a very long time and that it was visited by saints of other religions also. Guru Nanak had also visited this *Dargah* and prayed in it. People, therefore, should take full advantage of that holy place. Taking full advantage meant that all the people who lived there must be united at heart. There should never be a quarrel amongst them in the name of religion. D. D.

HOW TO ABOLISH CASTE

Two outstanding resolutions formed the main feature of the Constructive Workers' Conference at Sevagram: (1) an unequivocal reiteration of faith in the purity of means for achieving pure ends, and (2) a determination to work for establishing a society after Gandhiji's dream in which there was no caste and no opportunity for exploitation.

Both caste and exploitation of man by man are ancient institutions. From earliest times man learnt, through his own ingenuity, to devise means and methods to appropriate the fruit of another person's labour assuming at the same time the role of the master or benefactor whom his less intelligent brother must always subserve. The process soon hardened into established rights and privileges in human society, based on birth and rank and superiority complex on the one hand, and permanent disabilities due to lack of opportunity, inferiority complex and the stunting of human growth on the other. As a result, various forms of slavery and semi-slavish institutions grew in society which have disfigured the record of the entire human endeavour and blackened the course of human history.

Caste, as obtaining among the Hindus, is perhaps the worst specimen of such complexes. It has degraded and disintegrated us as perhaps nothing else has done throughout the course of our social evolution. It has bred among us, as among the ancient Jews, an utterly false sense of social superiority and made us vainglorious and exclusive in respect of our eating, drinking and modes of living. Our behaviour with others is in strange contrast with our professed high culture. It is repugnant to every moral sense and degrading in the extreme to human dignity. Unfortunately, through its persistence for centuries it has so hardened itself that it has come to be regarded not only as natural but God-devised and incumbent on all.

Gandhiji carried on a relentless crusade against untouchability in our midst for thirty years. Untouchability was only an extreme form of Hindu exclusiveness and superiority complex. The virus permeates the entire Hindu society, in forms more or less virulent. Gandhiji fought untouchability tooth and nail and sought to demolish its foundations by calling himself a Harijan and accepting a scavenger's status voluntarily. He thus dealt a mortal blow to the superiority complex of the so-called caste Hindus and raised the status and the stature of the lowliest. A similar crusade is now overdue for the abolition of caste from among the Hindus in every shape and form.

It may be conceded that in large cities and towns caste distinctions among Hindus are seen to be respected more in their breach nowadays than in their observance; that the caste Hindus eat publicly all manner of things, including 'prohibited foods', in cosmopolitan company at restaurants, hotels, clubs and at public functions without hesitation; that widow-marriages and inter-caste or inter-sub-caste marriages too are contracted in fair numbers. But this change is restricted, even in urban populations to a small circle; the great bulk of the community in the villages remains unaffected and static.

Even the city dwellers' pretentions at reform are generally only skin-deep. They violate orthodox caste injunctions with impunity out of doors for self-indulgence, in travelling for convenience and at public functions for coming in the limelight. There, or in the name of medicine, they might take even 'prohibited' foods and drinks. But they dare not do so in their native villages in the midst of their own society; or they will dine with a Harijan at a public function, but dare not engage a non-Brahmin cook, much less a Harijan, in their own household. Their heterodox behaviour is thus superficial and showy. It is no reform but only indulgence and can have little moral value.

Recently a movement has been afoot in America in which a few high-souled Americans, unable to bear the inequities practised by the whites against Negroes and other coloured inhabitants, renounce their status as whites and elect voluntarily to have the status of the coloured by making a solemn declaration to the effect before a Government registrar, and thus incur the disabilities and indignities involved in the position. A somewhat similar movement on the part of caste Hindus, I think, is overdue in order to demolish caste if we would have a casteless society.

Here are a few practical suggestions:

1. Abjure caste with all its privileges, and discriminations by way of a solemn public declaration. If Government should appoint an officer for that purpose, it could be done before him; otherwise it could be done in the office of an institution engaged in carrying out this reform, and before the council or headman of one's caste, sub-caste or community; and through newspapers;

2. Organize cosmopolitan gatherings where caste Hindus and Harijan families together with Muslims, Parsis, Christians, etc., will jointly cook simple vegetarian food and dine together, giving their names and addresses, together with photographs of the gathering if possible, with due publicity in newspapers and to the heads of their respective caste organizations;

3. Insist on inter-caste marriages;

4. Decline to accord recognition to caste by not attending its calls, paying its levies or customary dues or by otherwise complying with any of its injunctions;

5. Employ a person of the so-called low castes, preferably a Harijan, as cook or other domestic servant instead of a Brahmana or caste Hindu, whenever a servant is employed for domestic purposes;

6. Decline to mention one's caste before law courts or in forms of applications etc. of all public or private institutions, and agitate vigorously for the elimination of the caste column from all forms and records;

7. Refuse to receive or grant any scholarship, distinction, office, vote or other benefit coming from charities, institutions or organizations based on the caste ideal or restricted to further caste interest to the exclusion of other sections of society and refuse to associate with such exclusive bodies in any manner or capacity;

8. Sever connection with all organizations whether religious, social, political or economic which stand to safeguard or further the interests of a single caste, sub-caste or community to the exclusion of others.

Vapi, 20-5-'48 SWAMI ANAND

NOTES

Harilal Gandhi

Shri Harilal Gandhi, the eldest son of Gandhiji, expired on the night of the 19th instant at Bombay. Two or three days before his death someone informed one of his sons-in-law that he was very ill in some locality in Bombay. After two days he was traced in a T. B. hospital where he died the same night. He leaves behind him two daughters and a son. He was round about sixty.

Wardha, 21-6-'48

Badshah Khan

The Frontier Government has sent Khansaheb Abdul Gaffar Khan to prison under a sentence of three years. When a Government cannot do better than put its best incorruptible and sincere patriots of its State into prison it passes a vote of censure against itself. It is not less effective although not immediately followed by resignations.

Wardha, 21-6-'48

Frontier of Love and Co-operation

The following is reproduced from a report of the A. P. I., dated June 18, Calcutta, of the reply that H. E. Shri Rajagopalachari gave to a farewell address given to him by the Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Mr. Iswar Das Jalan:

> Referring to Mr. Jalan's remark that West Bengal was a frontier province and that it was one of the duties of the Governor-General to see that the frontier was well protected, Mr. Rajagopalachari said that they were thinking too much of the frontiers between India and Pakistan. In another sense somewhat different from what was generally meant, he would say that it (West Bengal) was really a frontier — a frontier where they could experiment on the practice of good understanding and mutual help and co-operation — a frontier not against aggression, but a frontier of co-operation.
>
> West Bengal, Mr. Rajagopalachari added, had the advantage of a commanding situation, from where her people could practise the art of uttermost co-operation towards those who were divided from them. Thereby West Bengal was a frontier for the practice of the new message, which Gandhiji wanted them to accept. The central tracts had not that advantage, he said, and it was very difficult for East Punjab to practise this towards West Punjab as a consequence of what had happened in the recent past.
>
> "The people of West Bengal", he continued, "can show to the world that a frontier can be a quite different thing from what they had hitherto imagined — an outpost for love, instead of an outpost for alarm. I do mean all this most seriously, because I have tested the talents of your people and I feel that you have the resources here and you have the emotional capital of affection and good understanding towards the people across the frontier. You have, therefore, every good chance of success and I wish you Godspeed in these frontier activities."

History of Satyagrahashram

During his incarceration at Yeravda in 1932 Gandhiji commenced to write on 5-4-'32 a *History of Satyagrahashram* in Gujarati. He could carry on the work only until 11-7-'32, on which date the writing abruptly came to an end, even the last sentence remaining unfinished. He could not recommence the work ever afterwards. The manuscript, as it is, has been published by the Navajivan Press recently with an introduction by Shri Kaka Kalelkar. It is hoped that in course of time it will also appear in its translations.

Both the words *History* and *Satyagrahashram* are used by Gandhiji in a special sense. *Satyagrahashram* does not mean exactly the institution at Sabarmati known by that name, but is closer in concept to words *Brahmacharyashram*, *Grihasthashram* etc. of the Hindu order of life. Gandhiji himself defines the word Ashram as "corporate life with a religious attitude".

The word *History* also does not have the usual conception of a chronological account of various events, changes, activities, personalities, births, deaths etc. of the institution at Sabarmati or elsewhere. To a great extent it is a record of the various shapes which the concepts of *satya* (truth), *prarthana* (prayer), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *brahmacharya* (self-control) and other observances took shape in course of time, either in their application in life or in their ideological import, during the period immediately preceding the record. In doing this too, it does not profess to give a chronological narration of these changes. Gandhiji does allude, now and then, to how certain permanence or change in ideas came about, but generally he gives his final opinions on these matters on the date of record. It is a matter of great regret that he could not complete this writing. But even the incomplete record, as it is, is very very educative and interesting, and, time and space permitting, I may give a few samples from it now and then for the English readers of *Harijan* pending its full translation into English.

16-6-'48 K. G. M.

Erratum

In the issue of *Harijan* June 6, 1948, page 123, column I, line 20: delete 'compassionate'.

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